

A VINDICATION
Of a Late
UNDERTAKING
OF
Certain Gentlemen,
In Order to the Suppressing of
DEBAUCHERY,
AND
PROFANENESS.

L O N D O N,
Printed in the YEAR, 1692.

A Vindication

Of a Law

UNDER TAKING

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General Gentlemen

In Order to the Subscribing of

REYNOLDS

AND

PROFANE ESSAYS

LONDON

Printed in the Year, 1692.

The Preface.

THE
P R E F A C E.

That which follows, had, for the substance of it, appeared abroad before now, but for the strange Imprudence of a Printer, and base Treachery of a certain Licen-fer; who was intrusted by him (wholly unawares to the Writer) with an imperfect Copy, and, as to the latter Part, a first Draught; which was promised to be returned home again, to have added or altered what should be thought fit.

And whosoever shall be offended at what is here Published, as taking themselves to be disobliged by it, I assure them it is not written from the least Ill-Will to any Person in the World, but from the greatest Good-Will; and that not onely to the best of Causes, but also to those Men who are most like to be incensed.

Metbinks I hear now our cautious Politico's ask-
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ing, What ays this Person to be thus Busily Interposing in the behalf of those, who must needs by their extraordinary Zeal be Exposing themselves to the high Displeasure of some, and the Censures of others, as a sort of Hot-headed and Rash Men? But if they'll vouchsafe to read what is here written, I hope they'll see no just Cause to Accuse him of being Over-Busy. But indeed, tho' the Apostle saith, It is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing: And tho' their cool Wisdomships can be as Hot as their Neighbours in their own Concerns, yet 'tis ordinary with many of them, to pass sly Reflexions upon all Religious Zeal. But why Zeal should not best become a Cause, wherein the Honour of Almighty God is most highly concerned, and our Country-Mens Happiness in the World to come, and this World too, they are too Wise to offer at a Reason.

But they'll Object, That the Ill-timing of a Good thing will make it Chargeable with Indiscretion. And who knows not this? But how can Zeal for so good a thing as the Reformation of our Manners, be ever Ill-timed? What is Absolutely necessary, 'tis impossible should be set about Unseasonably. And it Argues a mighty Distrust of the Divine Providence, to fear, from the Angering of the

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the Vicious Part of the Kingdom, any Evil that can be greater, than the Good of suppressing Vice, or so great. Nay, this savours of downright Infidelity and Irreligion. Nor seems it much less Culpable to think, That the disobliging of Wicked Men will be a weakning of this Government. For 'tis so far from being true, that the Governments giving all possible Discouragement to Vice, may be a Means to endanger it, that nothing can conduce more to the strengthening and securing thereof, nor so much neither; and that naturally, as well as through the Blessing of God Almighty. Honest Tully hath told us as much as this comes to. The Offence which profane and vicious Men may take at the Government, is a meer Scare-Crow; For so long as they see it for their Interest, to Adhere to it, there is no Fear but they will; and they'll put on a shew of being Reformed, nay and Ape a Zeal too for Reformation, rather than hazard their Preferments under it, or their Prince's Favour: And 'tis certain that the Government can be secure of such no longer, than their Interest holds them fast to it, tho' their Vices should be never so much connived at. But it hath been much observed both in City and Country, that those whose Conversations are none of the strictest, did upon the late Execution of the Laws, with some Briskness,

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Briskness, express great liking of it, in hopes of having for the future, their Children and Servants, under better Government. And the Truth is, the Height of Viciousness, to which the Youth of this Nation, and especially of this City, are arrived, is a most Melancholly Subject to reflect upon; but not to be Wondred at any more, than that bad Examples should be more powerful than good Precepts. And this presents us with as sad a Prospect, of the Age's being still more and more Corrupted, and of the next Ages proving worse than this, if more Time should be lost; and the setting in great earnest on the Work of Reformation be longer delayed. And I need not add, that the longer it is so, the Work will every Year be the more difficult.

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Undertaking of Certain Gentlemen, &c.

THE most deplorable Degeneracy of this Nation in its Morals, occasioned by the Encouragement, which for many years together, (for a well-known Reason) was given to Vice, raised in the minds of serious People, very strong Apprehensions of approaching Judgments; and accordingly very great ones came down upon us; and *Two* such, as no Age hath parallel'd in these Kingdoms, within a few years after the Return of King *Charles*. But those having produced nothing of Reformation, they were followed with others from time to time; and these likewise being lost upon us, at length we had all the reason in the World to look for the heaviest Calamities that could befall us, *viz.* **Popery** and **Slavery**; but when these were at the door and just entering, so infinitely Merciful was He to us, *Whose ways are not as our ways, nor whose thoughts as ours*, as strangely to surprize us with a happy Deliverance.

And the blessed Instrument thereof, with His most Virtuous Comfort; being by God's wonderful Providence plac'd on the Throne, never were so great Hopes

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Hopes conceived as *now*, of an Effectual Reformation.

But alas, in a short time it was too apparent, that this Deliverance came too soon, to be much valued by such a People, as generally *We* were. It found us miserably unqualified to receive it, and the Returns we have made to the DIVINE Goodness for it, speak us no less unworthy of the continuance of it. For neither hath the First Part of the Deliverance, nor the many amazing things God Almighty hath since done, both at home and abroad, towards the perfecting and securing thereof, had any *visible* good Effect upon us. But those Vices which before reigned, and cryed to Heaven for Vengeance, do reign still as much as ever; and those who were *filthy before*, let God use never so powerful Means for the cleansing of them, *will be filthy still*; as if, to speak in the Prophets Language, *They had made a Covenant with Death, and were at an Agreement with Hell*.

And whereas we have very good Laws for the suppressing of Vice, I will not say how very few have hitherto shewed, any thing of Zeal or an hearty Concern (notwithstanding the highest Obligation) for the Execution of them: Nor from how many nothing is to be expected, but an extream Averseness to a Reformation.

But to come to the Business of these Papers: Certain pious Gentlemen, all of the Church of *England*, laying greatly to heart *these* things, resolved to make Tryal, whether any thing could be done, towards the giving a Check to Debauchery and Profaneness; and joyntly pitch't upon this following Method for the Reforming of Offenders in those *Two* most scandalous Instances, by due Course of Law, *viz.*

First,

First, To endeavour the procuring of a Letter from the Queen (the King being then absent) to the Justices of the Peace for the County of *Middlesex*, requiring them to put the Laws in Execution against *Drunkennes*, *Uncleanness*, *Swearing*, *Curſing*, *Profanation of the Lords Day*, &c.

Secondly, To endeavour the obtaining a *good Order of Sessions* to be made thereon. And Her Majesty having (like Her self) most chearfully granted the humble Request of the Lord Bishop of *Worcester*, for such a Letter; and having accordingly sent a very pious and pressing one to those Justices; and the Justices having thereupon publish't an exceeding good Order, These Gentlemen, encouraged with this good Success,

Thirdly, Made it their Request to many of their Acquaintance, (and all of the Church of *England* too) whom they knew to be Sober and Religious Persons, to give Information to some Justice of the Peace, of all Offences of the forementioned Nature, which they should observe to be committed; as by the *Order of Sessions* they are encouraged to do.

And that all possible Ease might be given to the *Informers*, the *Justices*, and their *Clerks*:

1. They Printed Blank-Warrants against the several Offences.

2. They procured divers Persons (to the Number of Eighteen or Twenty) inhabiting in convenient places of the City and Suburbs, to fill up such Warrants, as the Case should happen to be; for the Informers, who should carry the same to the Justice; by which means he would have nothing more to do,

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but to Examine them upon Oath, and Sign and Seal the said Warrants. And,

3. To ease the Justices Servant of the trouble of carrying every Warrant to the proper Officer, the Informer was to take his Warrant back with him to the Person who filled it up; with whom care was taken to have it executed; as will appear presently.

That the Penalties might be duly applied to the use of the Poor, and not imbezeld by the Constables or Church-wardens, they took this Method.

1. They directed every Person who filled up the Warrants, to keep an Account or Register of the several Offenders Names, the Offence of each, the Time *when*, and Place *where* each Offence was committed: And, when the Informer had brought him back the Warrant, to insert also the Name of the Magistrate, before whom each Conviction was made;

2. They appointed a special Messenger, and paid him well for his pains, to Collect all the said Warrants and Registers weekly; and, after they were sorted, to carry them out again to the proper Officers of the several Parishes where they were to be executed; and to insert the Names of the several Constables, to whom each of the said Warrants should be delivered, in the said Registers.

3. They prepared an Abstract of these Registers, to be presented to the Justices at their *Petty-Sessions*, for the enabling them to call every Constable to an Account, how he had executed the several Warrants he was Charged with in that Register; and to what Church-warden he had paid the Penalties by him levied.

4. A short Account was to be taken out of all those Abstracts, by which to Charge the several Church-

Church-wardens, at the making up of their Accounts with all the Money by them received on those Warrants, in order to their sending it to the several *Vestries* once a Year.

And lastly, To awaken all good Christians throughout the Kingdom, Whether Magistrates or private Persons, to a vigorous endeavour for a Reformation of Manners, They set the good Example of the Justices of *Middlesex*, and the following *as good a one*, of the Lord Mayor of *London*, and Court of Aldermen, before the rest of the Nation. For which purpose they caused the Orders of the said Sessions and Court, to be Printed in a smaller Character; and of *these* they sent several Thousands throughout the Kingdom, *viz.* To most *Parliament-Men*, *Mayors*, *Bayliffs*, *Justices of the Peace*, *Ministers*, *Coffee-houses*, &c. and the Printing and Postage too were wholly at their own Charge.

And, Thanks be to God, they quickly saw extraordinary good Effects hereof, in the excellent Orders of the like nature, made by the Cities of *Tork*, *Gloucester*, &c. And by the Counties of *Hertford*, *Buckingham*, *Bedford*, *Sussex*, *Gloucester*, the North-Riding of *Yorkshire*, and divers others.

And there was perceived very good Success of their Endeavours at home, by the manifest ceasing in a great measure of the Profanation of the Lords Day; and the Awe that appeared upon many Common Swearers and Drunkards, who either felt, or had Notice of, the Execution of the Laws against such Offenders.

But for as much as another sort of Informers, who had been so busie a few Years since, hath made that Name odious to inconsiderate People; and that the restraining of Licentiousness, is ever extremely grievous.

to the Licencious, 'twas necessary that the Justice should be desired by the Informer to conceal his Name from the Offender: There having been too many Instances of late, not unknown to the Justices, of those, who, instead of amending by the gentle Punishment of *one Sin*, have added *more* to it, by reeking their Revenge on such as Informed against them, with great Barbarity. I say the concealing the Informers Name, for *this Reason*, ought to be judged necessary; especially when he is ready to appear, and prove the Fact to the Face of the Offender, in case he persists in the denial of it. And Care was taken, that in *this case* the Informer should adventure to appear, although the Law doth not oblige to it; as will be seen anon.

This is an exactly true, but imperfect Narrative of the undertaking of these Gentlemen; and is it possible it should need a *Vindication*? Who would not now wonder that such a Word as *this* should be seen in our *Title-Page*? For can there be a Nobler Design laid, than that which is directly and solely for the Advancement of the Publick Good? And is not *that* Good, which comprehends both the Spiritual and Temporal Interest of the Publick, the incomparably greatest Publick Good? And is not he a *Brute* who needs to be told, that *the Reformation of Mankind*, and *Running down of Vice*, is *such* a Good as contains in it both these Interests? But *this* was the *only* Design of this Undertaking. And it hath been shewed, that it was not limited to the Reformation of one *City*, or one *County*, but it extended to the whole *Kingdom*. And a due Countenance from those who are principally obliged to encourage it, must needs cause it to have in time, an happy Influence upon both the *other* King-

Kingdoms. And *Then*, how much farther in the World it may by Gods blessing reach, *HE* only knows.

Moreover, these Gentlemen were so far from designing to serve *Themselves* by this *Undertaking*, that, as they were not capable of getting one Penny for their pains, so they expended in the carrying of it on, considerable Sums out of their own Purses.

Nor can they with any Justice or Charity be censured, as designing the Applause of the Sober and Virtuous part of the Nation, (as highly as they deserve it) for we are wholly beholden to their *Enemies* for our knowledge of so much as *One* of the Undertakers, or of the Undertaking it self. And those who received the Printed Orders all over the Kingdom, were perfectly Ignorant from whose hands they came.

And as to the foresaid *Method* they agreed on, for the Managing of this Design, it as little needs a *Vindication* as the *Design* it self; and is so far from being lyable to be taxed with Imprudence, that I (for my part) must needs profess, I greatly admire the Wisdom of the Contrivance. I Challenge those who dare to Reproach it, to shew *Any* Project better fitted for the Attainment of its End, than this throughout is. 'Tis scarce *Civil* to desire them to Mend it *Themselves*, since there is no Employment they can be more Averse to.

In short, 'tis a lamentable Instance of the Debauchery of the Age, That it is not a piece of great Impertinence to publish a Vindication of *Such* an *Undertaking*. But so it is, That the Clamours of Delinquents, which, where they are readily received, shall never be wanting; served for an Occasion to
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Certain Gentlemen, whose *Own* Conversations will not suffer them to be reconciled to the thoughts of a General Reformation, to Calumniate it, with the Persons concerned in it; and to do their utmost to Overthrow it. All the Tales of punish'd Ale-House-keepers and other Criminals, were by *Them* immediately received as *Gospel*, since they were told by such dis-interested and unbiass people; and here-upon they fall to Work. And no Wonder, for if the Prince of *Darkness* had not *Now* bestirr'd himself, to Baffle a Design so directly levelled against his Kingdom, this would doubtless have been the very *First* time of his being unconcern'd upon such an Occasion.

And *First* these Persons satisfied themselves a while with playing at *Small-Game*; and among other most Notorious Untruths, they gave it out with great assurance, That there was a wonderfully gainful Office lately set up in *Lincolns-Inn*, where Hundreds of Pounds were already gotten by the Erectors of it. And what great pity is it, provided the *Tempting Wages* could have reconciled them to such *Loathsome Work*, that *Themselves* had no interest in the Stock going there? By my consent, they should have had Shares *Gratis* upon that condition; nay, could they have been hyred thereby not to *Hinder* Business, the Founders of the Office should have done all the Drudgery, and *They* should have all the Gains, but that the *Poor* ran away with every Farthing.

And, by the way, the Informers too who were engaged in this Undertaking, refused to receive a penny of the Penalties in those Cases wherein the Law alloweth them the *Third* part. They desired no other Reward for so good a Work, than what they are sure

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to have in the *Other World*, and would have only their *Labour for their Pains in This*.

And when it appeared to every body by the *Form* of the Warrants, that the Constables were to pay the Money they had Levyed upon Offenders, to the Church-Wardens, for the use of the Poor, the fore-said persons found that a *Lye* could do them very little Service, which was every whit as easily *detected* as *told*.

And now from Talking they proceed to *Action*; and 'tis well known how the *First Blow* was given to this Undertaking; though several Worthy Justices of the *Peace*, to their Honour be it spoken, heartily interposed for the prevention of it.

In order to it, they in the first place fell very heavily on Mr. *Hartley*, a virtuous person, who had given as a Justice, all possible encouragement to this Best of Works. He was loaded with diverse Accusations of Injustice in his *Proceedings*; and those on which the greatest Weight was laid, were the *Two* following, whereby the Reader may judge of the rest. And perhaps they were both *True* as to matter of *Fact*, whatever they were as to their Faultiness.

One was, That the Name of the Landlord of an Ale House was inserted in one of his Warrants, instead of the Tenant's who kept the House.

The other, That a Woman was called in another Warrant by the Name of her dead Husband, after she was again Married.

Now as to the *Former*, it is said, That the Landlord also liv'd in the House; so that 'twas unknown to many which of them was Master of it: However, the House was ascertained in the Warrant, and the Offence against the Law, there committed, positively Sworn to.

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And as to the *Latter*, 'Tis ordinary among the meaner sort, to call Women, at least for some time after their second Marriages, by the Names of their former Husbands: And those who had not heard of the Husbands death, might without any great Offence presume him to be still Living. Nor was it necessary that all who knew of his Death, should know that his Widow was a Wife again.

These are the only Objections which we find particularly assign'd against Mr. *Hartley's* proceedings, and therefore Unpardonable Faults no doubt! But the best of it is, they were the *Informers* not the *Justices*. But can any one of those who have made such ado with these two Trifles, make any body believe that *His* Justiceship (if he be in Commission) was never so imposed on? He hath had very little Custom, or very great Luck, if it never was. But old *Æsop* hath helpt us to a true Proverb: *It is an easie thing to find a Staff to beat a Dog.* But suppose these *Two* were Culpable Mistakes, for want of due Caution, as those who have made such mighty matters of them, can't think them so in the *Justice*, and scarcely in the *Informers*: I wish they would seriously consider, what means that Question of our Blessed Saviour; *Why beholdest thou the Mote which is in thy Brothers Eye, and perceivest not the Beam that is in thine Own Eye?* O how happy would it be for, especially some of *Them*, were *They* chargeable with no worse Mistakes, or lay they under the scandal of nothing worse than Mistakes!

Such *Little* things as *These*, and which are as soon rectified as perceived, would be easily over-look't for the sake of the Greatness and Nobleness of the Undertaking, by all such as heartily desire a Reformation;

mation; nay, by those who are but able to bear the thoughts of it: Nay, one would think too, by those who, though they would fain have none, have so much Modesty remaining, as to be ashamed *Openly* to Oppose it. Which sure none can have the impious Bravery to do, but such as would make a true Story of the Fiction of the *Giants*, by designedly fighting against GOD Himself, if they believe there is one. And as it is eminently *HIS* Cause in which these Pious Gentlemen engaged themselves; so no Christian can doubt, nor scarce a hearty Theist, whether God hath a *Special* Hand in all Undertakings of this nature; nor whether those who are employed in them are *HIS Instruments*; Called, *Spirited* and *Assisted* by Him: I mean on supposition, that they carry on their Work by Lawful means, and transgress not the Bounds of those Stations in which Providence hath placed them. But *Malice* it self may be defyed to shew any one Instance, wherein these persons (the Undertakers I mean) have not strictly kept to the observance of *Humane*, as well as the *Divine* Laws; or acted out of their own Sphere.

It is evident by the foresaid Narrative, that there was nothing in their Undertaking, but what they had at least *Liberty* from our Laws to do, nay, a *Commission* (I mean a general one) from GOD to do; and the Queens Commission too, may be easily made out of Her Majesties most Gracious Letter, for what they have done; could they stand in any need of it.

As to the particular Charges against *Two* of the Undertakers, and divers of the Informers, the world will quickly be satisfied they are mere Forgeries by a better Hand; and therefore I will wholly wave them. Mr. *Hartley* will be also Vindicated from the other Misdemeanours objected against him in the Execution of his Office; but I cannot forbear to touch upon *Two* more of *These*.

One was, That he play'd the *Busy-Body* in Acting out of his own *Division*. And 'tis true, that he did so act, but not that he was a *Busy-Body* in so doing. For, as he did it not but when 'twas *Necessary*, so he had expressly Violated his Justices Oath, if he had refused it.

The *Other* was, his Convicting Offenders, without bringing *Them* and their *Accusers* face to face. Now, besides what hath been said to *This* already, which shews the necessity of his frequently so doing, so the Law ought not to be understood as being against it: For the same *Magna Charta* which saith, That *No man shall be Condemned Unheard*; saith also, That *No man shall be disseized of his Goods or Life, but by a Tryal per Pares*. In which *Latter*, if an Act of Parliament hath dispensed as to *Goods*, it may well be construed so to do in the *Former* Clause; especially when there is no proportion between the Crime and the Punishment: I mean, when the *Former* is very *Great*, and the *Latter* as *Little*; and *This* not to be inflicted but by a solemn Conviction upon the Oath of a Credible person,

person, and in some cases of *Two*; and the Oaths likewise of such, as get not one Farthing of the Penalty.

This is as much as we design to say, relating to the *First* Blow that was given to this Undertaking. A *Second* soon followed it, and this proved a *Home* one. And Gods will be done, if there is no Remedy to be had. But there is little likelihood of *Any*, should Good men be so sheepish, as to conceal, or only vent to one another, their sorrowful Resentment of fierce Oppositions to Reformation, and such an open Contempt as is now cast upon the best of Queens, in Baffling a Design so well adapted to the promoting of the Business of her Excellent Letter. And of the great Encouragement given to Licentious publick Houses; of several instances of which, diverse *Bishops*, to their no small Trouble, have been Ear-Witnesses.

There is an Objection which have been too often made against the Restraining of such Houses, *viz.* That their Majesties *Excise* will be greatly Lessened by this means. But who is able to think it can be Grateful to such a King and Queen as we are now Bless'd with, to have their Revenue enlarged by the Sins of their People? Who can be Ignorant, that there is nothing they would more Abominate? Or that their Majesties do not need to be told, that their Revenue must most certainly be exceedingly diminished by the *Poverty* of their Subjects; And nothing is more observed, than that Multitudes of them do every year bring Themselves and Families to a Morsel of Bread, by being

permitted so much Drink; expressly contrary to our Laws, which lay great Restraints upon Drinking-houses, and Drinkers in them; not only on Sundays, but the Week-dayes too.

Possibly some may object against the Matter of these Pages, *that* Advice of the Poet:

Dum Furor in cursu est, &c.

*When you see Fury ride full speed,
Get out o'th' way of Fury's Steed.*

And censure it as too Heady an Act, now Vice is so Rampant, *thus* to expose our selves to the Rage of the Vicious.

But it may be replied, That whosoever is heartily concerned at Vice's being now so Rampant, must have the Soul of a *Nit*, if he fears looking it in the Face in such a Reign as *this*. If he be more afraid of Debauchees and Profane Persons in King *William's* and *Q. Mary's* Reign, than many were of Papists and Jesuites in King *James's*. Or apprehends more danger in Attacquing those *now*, than these *then*, without the Leave of a Licenser.

And as to the *Governments* having any Reason to be afraid of provoking them, I add to what is said in the *Preface*, that Vice is a Dastardly Cow-hearted thing, and always sneaks when bravely born up to; having nothing to plead in its own Defence. But
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could vicious Men invent any thing to say for themselves, they are still *self-condemned*. Their Vices also make them too soft and effeminate, to carry on with any Vigour a dangerous Design. Nor can they confide in one another, in laying a Conspiracy, as having no Principle to secure Fidelity: So that there is not the least fear of their being too hard for the sober part of the Nation; of which I hope there are an Hundred to one on the side of the Government.

Were those who bear an implacable Enmity to any thing of Reformation, onely injurious to *their own* Souls, the Charity we have for them, might have forbidden us to be silent, upon such an occasion as is now given us; much less then can we have any Temptation to be shy of Offending them, when we consider how extreemly the Publick, and Their Majesties Great Affairs have suffered by them, and are still like to suffer; and what heavy Judgments ought to be expected from a most highly Provoked God, for the Toleration of so much Wickedness, after as great Obligations as ever were laid upon a Nation.

Now the *Third* Time draws on a pace, when He, who is *the Light of our Eyes, and the Breath of our Nostrils*, designs to expose His Sacred Person for our Safety, and the Well-fare of all Christendom, to such Dangers as nothing but the Courage of a Matchless Hero could encounter: And therefore 'tis *more* than time, that a more effectual Course than ever be taken to run down those Enemies at home (our Reigning Sins) which

which may do, through God's just Judgment, our Potent Enemy, abroad more Service, than all the Preparations he hath made against us. And in Order thereunto, to take all possible Care, that none be intrusted with the Business of Reforming *others*, who need as much as *any* to be Reformed *themselves*. As also to give all Encouragement to those, whose hearts God hath inclined to give their helping Hand to a Work of such Absolute Necessity, We may be much afraid to think of the King's again leaving us, before this be done, or at least a doing.

And, Thanks be to GOD, and Their Majesties, since this was written comes the happy News, of this Work's being again set on foot, by a most pious Proclamation.

FINIS.

